TIRED AND WEARY

NO 7 THE BIRMINGHAM CITY FANZINE 40p

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

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COMMENT

How much have you earned in the last three years? Fifteen thousand? Twenty? Thirty? Any of you made a quarter of a million? Ken Wheldon did. Three years four months in charge at Blues and the man who said he'd never taken a penny in wages from Birmingham City is £250,000 richer. Now he's 'unpaid' managing-director but it would be nice to know whether he's claiming expenses or if the Walsall Scrap Metal Company is receiving compensation as happened when our Ken was at Fellows Park.

So he's dead but he won't lie down. In theory, he's not making key decisions. But in practice, it's not so simple. Along with Secretary John Westmancoat, he's still there and still influential. Chairman Samesh Kumar seems to be trying to run Blues by turning up one day a week, but he won't do a proper job this way. The reasoning, that he needs the help of people experienced in running a football club, is in part understandable (though the principles of success are the same be they in soccer or the rag trade) but the advice of men who presided over the club's decline and fall is not that which we'd take. Wheldon is too cautious, too secretive. Westmancoat should simply be dismissed. Almost everyone we speak to about Blues complains of him and he's a liability we can't afford. Between them, the two W's form an unwelcoming reception committee for fans, the business community and others who might wish to assist. Until they go, many people just won't trust Birmingham City - and who can blame them?

So what of the Kumars? Their takeover leaves Blues a subsiduary of BRS Kumar Brothers Limited (there's sound tax reasons for this). Rich and enthusiastic they may be, but Samesh, Ramesh and Bimal haven't bought the club as their plaything. If it doesn't make money, it'll be disposed of.

It's probably too soon to judge if the Kumars will be good for Blues, but as guardians of our football club they must recognise how great their responsibilities are. So it was disappointing to see their shabby treatment of

Garry Pendrey which bore all the hallmarks of a Wheldon ruse. Pendrey was a poor manager who had to go, but he had a contract and Blues should have paid him off instead of making his position untenable in an attempt to force him to resign. Pendrey's appointment at the Molineux is most interesting - will he now pursue his legal claims against Blues or is the widely suspected Wheldon/ Wolves connection at work? Expect an 'out of court' settlement to be announced soon.

The Ernie Adkins affair left an equally sour taste, particularly as it seems he had been told he would be retained for another year. Whether he was good at his job is irrelevant, the apparent demand that he provide free pre-match entertainment for every home game was unrealistic as well the management knew. As Adkins was only 'loaned' to Blues by Tom Edmunds' company it's unclear why the club didn't just send him back, rather than creating a scene.

BOBBY FERGUSON

Then there's the new supporters club. The old one under Maurice Reubins was a disgrace but if Blues want to run a club then they should pay for the personnel needed to operate it, rather than asking enthusiastic fans to run it in their spare time. This is exploitation when, at £5 per member plus bar profits, the club shouldn't be short of cash. All these thing smack of trying to do things on the cheap and not caring who gets hurt, used or ripped off in the process. That's not how we think our football club should be run.

More positively, admission prices were frozen when all of our neighbours, including fellow partners in relegation, Walsall, have raised theirs. The marketing of season tickets was poor though with hardly any advertisements or publicity in the press (saving money again?) But the fact is it's possible to watch football at St Andrews for under £2 per game which is excellent. The executive box price rise is welcome. It caused a small kerfuffle, but nobody's forced to watch their football behind a glass screen and if people can't stand or sit with the rest of us, then that's their problem. New commercial manager Frank Wilson has a key role to play. It's important he understands a golden rule of football-businesses sponsor the game because they want a place where they can impress their clients while persuading them to hand over their money - so businesses are fair game to be milked. Fans sponsor football because they love they game so you repay their loyalty by looking after their interests. Wilson's plan to offer local schools seats for matches is the sort of iniative the club need and we urge him to look at the schemes Milwall, Preston and Watford have undertaken.

The Mark One Shirt sponsorship deal certainly boosts finances while the summer rockfest - UB40 Plays the Blues - proved a great success and showed what can be done to increase use of the stadium (the credit for which must go to the Wheldon regime). Similarly, the market plan could have been lucrative, and provided a community asset in an area starved of them, if council approval had been forthcoming.

Refurbishment of the supporters, executive and other social clubs is a long overdue investment. But the work mustn't stop there. The area around St Andrews is an eyesore and an embarrassment, it's dangerous and it's a deterrent to potential supporters and investors. Blues own much of this land, so why not invite fans to come and help spruce the place up - clearing litter, cutting grass etc in return for a meal, a chance to meet some players and a ticket to a forthcoming match. When they took control, the Kumars stressed the importance of supporters. Samesh's call to fans to write to him with comments on the Blues, and the statement that shares would soon be offered for sale (thus allowing buyers to attend the AGM) are fine as far as they go. But open meetings where all fans and local residents could discuss their problems and put forward ideas would be much more productive. If they club are into saving money, then there's a vast source of knowledge and experience just waiting to be tapped - and asking fans is far cheaper than employing design consultants.

On the footballing side, Dave Mackay should be an improvement. His assistant, Bobby Ferguson, is well respected for his work as understudy to Bobby Robson at Ipswich and looks to be a fine capture, while Chief Scout Bill Caldwell was in-

strumental in producing Doncaster's successful 1988 FA Youth Cup team. It's vital we go up at the first attempt, lest the club drifts into a third division lifestyle with third division attitudes. Promotion from any league requires liberal use of words such as 'gutsy', 'commitment' and 'battling'. Mackay's vocabulary indicates he could be the man for the job. Whether he's the man to win us the 1991/2 League Championship is another matter.

KUMAR WESTMANCOAT MACKAY

It's good to see (or read about, to be precise) Blues buying players again but we hope that the £500,000 Mackay says is available is not dependent on further selling. The days of wheeling and dealing and paying low wages must be over, because at today's prices, half a million pounds is unlikely to get us very far. For Blues to return to the First Division the Kumars will have to find more money. Both they and Mackay have rightly highlighted the young talent at the club (and the call for lads wanting trials to get in touch is enlightened, provided too many 52-year olds aren't invited) but they musn't be used as an excuse for not buying.

So has Mackay spent wisely? Reports suggest Colin Gordon hasn't fulfilled his early promise and Phil Sproson, while highly rated at Port Vale, is a risk whatever our club doctor might say. But Dennis Bailey's recent goalscoring record is good and it's no disgrace to be kept out of the Palace team by the Bright/Wright combination. Trevor Matthewson and Paul Shepstone however, remain something of a mystery. Of the players who've left, only Des Bremner will be missed. It'll be a shame if we lose Overson and, to a lesser extent, Ian Atkins, but we've bought replacements and Vince can't really be blamed for wanting to play at a higher level.

Experience will be vital in the season ahead. Many of the youngsters may struggle in the unyielding 46-game third division (not counting those interminable Sherpa Van matches). If Blues can repeat the kind of results achieved against disinterested and bored opposition late last season, then thing could get interesting.

The Kumar's philosophy seems to be that everything and everybody should work for the benefit of Birmingham City (aka BRS Kumar Brothers Limited's balance sheet). Samesh's remark that "we inherited many lethargic attitudes" is a clear criticism of Wheldon and Westmancoat. Their unnecessary austerity was foolish and it's to be hoped that the new owners provide the resources needed to make Blues a club worthy of the city's go-ahead nature. More enterprising things have happened in the Kumars' first four months than in Wheldon's forty but there are worrying signs that they'd like to cut corners wherever possible. They'd best appreciate what the rebirth of the Blues is going to take because our Saturdays are in their hands. At least we'll be able to watch events unfold from the Tilton at long last. Let's hope we're successful enough to fill it!

BANNING ORDER

When the Kumars took over Samesh agreed to be interviewed by us. We made two appointments but he cancelled them both. He then wrote us a letter banning Tired and Weary from sale at St Andrews, the reason given being that by continuing to sell our magazine we would affect programme sales. The ban is petty but we will comply. So please don't ask for magazines in the ground. Tired and Weary remains widely available, both via the outlets listed on page 2 and from other places around St Andrews on matchdays. Samesh Kumar has so far declined to meet with us though he has indicated that if Tired and Weary wishes to make a financial contribution to the club, he might reconsider. When Mr Kumar starts charging the profit making Evening Mail, BRMB and Daily News for speaking to him then we will give it further thought. Until then, we reiterate our no strings invitation to Sam to come chew the fat with us.

HILLSBOROUGH AND BEYOND

I didn't go to Barnsley. Call myself a football fan and I was shopping in town. At 3.40 I went to catch the half-times. Very soon Blues' relegation was irrelevant. I've never felt so depressed about football as I did in the next seven days. It didn't seem right to play Swindon the following Tuesday. When 95 fellow fans had died it didn't seem right to even think of enjoying myself.

What happened at Hillsborough wasn't a freak accident, an unfortunate chain of events that got out of control. It was the inevitable consequence of the contemptuous way English football fans are treated by the game's authorities, the police, Tory MPs and the sensationalist media. It must be the end of the line for the fools who brand us as a race apart because if it isn't, then somewhere, sometime, there's going to be another tragedy.

Football will never be the same - which in itself is no bad thing. But even as the disaster was unfolding, people were trying to profit from it - photographers blocked escape routes, climbing the fence to take pictures, while MPs such as Ivan Patrick and David Evans used it as an excuse to push for ID cards.

But it's imperative that out of it all supporters get a better deal. ID cards and all-seater stadiums have no part in that. Hillsborough simply emphasised the case against cards and makes the Government's unprecedented attempts to force the Bill through Parliament even more shocking. They don't care a jot about us as long as they get their damned legislation on the statute books. Then they'll leave all the problems for the football authorities to sort out and wash their hands of it if anyone is killed or injured as a result of the scheme. So lobby your MP, your local media and keep saying NO to ID cards.

As for all-seaters, we don't need them. Terracing isn't in itself unsafe. But it certainly becomes so when you stick a metal cage in front of it and overcrowd it by 50%. Rugby manages fine with terracing because rugby doesn't have perimeter fences. Seats are obstacles. The 'Green Guide' on ground safety recommends longer evacuation times for seats than terracing. All-seaters will reduce ground capacities at a time when attendances are climbing. The result will be a rise in admission prices and more ticket touting. The game will be taken out of the reach of large sections of the community, leading to increased social problems (anyone doubting this should look at America; highly priced all-seat sport and high levels of adolescent violence). Football must have bigger, not smaller, ground capacities.

And we need three of four publicly owned regional super stadia, funded by central government from the hundreds of millions they take from the game each year in tax. Many European governments invest money in football (the Italians are currently funding a £220m rebuilding programme in preparation for the next World Cup). Our Government invests nothing in football - and for a country where sports spectating is such a national pastime, that's absurd. Finally, the argument that seats reduce violence is bollocks. Remember, the trouble at Palace started in the seats!

High perimeter fences should be removed. Fans have told of their dangers for years (see Off The Ball Issue 13, Feb/March 1988) but nobody listened. Crystal Palace's fences were acceptable. There may be the occasional on-pitch punch up but that's preferable to more deaths. Swing-open gates such as those in Lyons are not the answer. In Sheffield, by the time the police finally realised there was a problem, most of the 95 victims were probably either dead or beyond saving. The decision to evacuate an area must be made by the people in that area, rather than by onlookers.

The most productive thing that could come out of Hillsborough would be for all the self-appointed experts to shut up - for good. They grab positions of power but never used them to highlight the dangerous treatment of fans. Suddenly they're telling us what a bad deal fans have been getting. Why didn't they use their influence to do something about it earlier? They fiddled and fans died and still they tell us what's good for us. Their scenario involves ID cards, all-seaters and death trap fences. These people are sickening.

Few groups emerged from the disaster with their reputations enhanced. One that did was the Football Supporters Association. We have repeatedly promoted this organisation and unashamedly do so again. You will know by now something of what the FSA is capable of. It's representation at the Taylor Inquiry has given fans a direct input into probably the most thorough investigation ever into English soccer. The future of football includes a voice for the fans. The FSA will largely be that voice. After Hillsborough, there can be no other way.

Join the FSA for £3 per annum at PO BOX 11, Liverpool L26 1XP or at the West Midlands Branch Meetings held on the second Monday of each month upstairs at The Victoria pub, John Bright Street, in the city centre. Kick-off is 8.00pm.

Steve Beauchampé

FUN

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the time of the fancy dress, it was the time of the fist. Crystal Palace is a game that none of us will forget in a hurry. Below Jim Bryant remembers the fun and reviews the fashion while overleaf, Steve Beauchampé discusses the darker side and reports on what happens next.

Mid-February, and Blues had been as good as down for five months. Yet out of the gloom and the home defeat to Bournemouth came a strange man bearing gifts - invitations to an end of season fancy dress relegation celebration at Crystal Palace's ground. The rest is legend. Spirits lifted, a celebratory song was composed and both local and national media took up the story.

Come matchday, and early morning bus passengers sat trying to pretend nothing was happening, as around them furry animals chatted nonchalantly. New Street Station hadn't seen anything like it with yellow chicks, red Indians, a giant panda, a fully kitted out Ruud Gullit and enough pirates to sink a galleon among the party-goers on its concourse. Meanwhile, in the city centre confused bystanders watched as a plethora of blue and white painted faces, Super Heroes, Walt Disney characters and a near crusader's worth of knights streamed through the streets to join the convoy of around forty coaches heading south.

Hence the revellry had long since begun by the time Selhurst Park was reached. What local residents made of it all goodness knows, but plenty of Palace fans were enjoying it as supporters shared pub bars and pavements and mixed freely and happily around the ground. The police seemed to be taking it in just the right spirit, relaxing the law to allow fans to take swords, daggers machine guns into the stadium. Searching was light - after all how do you frisk a pope? But the main spectacle was saved for inside. Entering the Blues section was like walking into a party. When the team came out, the reaction made the hairs on the back of your neck bristle. It was fantastic - confetti, balloons, streamers, part poppers, even beach balls and lilos were thrown into the air. And everywhere there were people in costumes - hundreds upon hundreds of costumes.

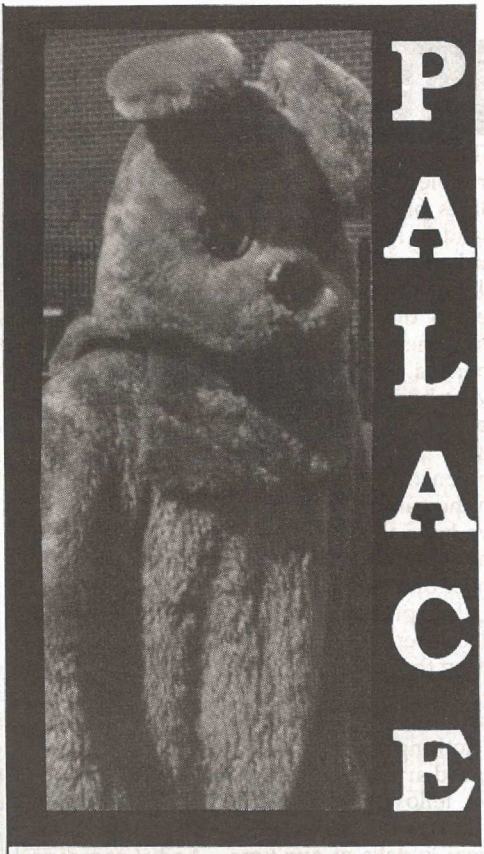
The carnival atmosphere took hold of everyone. One chap clung to a fence in the hope of controlling his laughter fits, 'till an Egytian mummy, a spaceman - complete with backpack and helmet, three drunken vicars and a Father Christmas finally felled him. The merriment even filtered through to some of our motley crew. At Thames Link, a railway porter spotted a wizard in our party and tried to teach him a few tricks. John Kelly (the man on the telly), in horrible sixties hippie garb, returned from the pub, covering himself in relish in a failed attempt to eat his hamburger. Our cartoonist, Adrian Brown, ever the artist and Blue Peter traditionalist, used his kitchen utensils to make a Beau Brummie Dog

mask (the worst fancy dress of the day?) Beauchampé wore black for a change, while Matt Cole and I went way over the top, wearing a Birmingham City badge EACH!!

Someone was persistantly hauling a Blues emblem across the terrace, which the Prince Charles lookalike no doubt described as a monstrous carbuncle. Generalissimo of the Supporters Club, Lyn Goodman, cleverly highlighted those ridiculous American Football kits, while an equally daft looking frog claimed he was actually wearing a suit. Try as he might, our wizard couldn't turn him into a handsome prince. Nearby, the lads in the Andy Pandy outfits placed serious doubts on their characters, while the arrival of the Minstrel Wanderers in full kit just confirmed theirs.

In true competition tradition, the fiver on offer for our fave costume proved hard to judge. Out of all the excellent runners-up, the military certainly put in a good challenge. There was a Biggles, a Napoleon, numerous Adolf Hitlers, stormtroopers and SS Officers, an American marine and best of all, a Russian General who played the part superbly, patrolling the dividing barrier between the two sets of supporters. The cavaliers and musketeers were most realistic - except for the one touting a water pistol, sporadically spraying all and sundrey. (Let's hope it WAS water!) But none of these won, and neither did the Billy Bunter, Humpty Dumpty, Spiderman, Pink Panther, giant bumble bee, executioner, the many Blues Brothers or any of the clowns, tigers, ghouls or orders of monks (and in one case a monkess). Not even a pair of tackily dressed Kumar brothers or the guy in his pyjamas scooped first prize - and definitely not the Mexican bandit who didn't buy a fanzine as he'd "run out of pesatos". So, risking bitching among the men in drag, the prize was awarded to the blue and white jockey and his two man pantomime horse who, if nothing else, deserved it for trying to ride through the turnstiles in full costume (we think they made it).

There was a serious side to the day of course, but even those incidents had their lighter sides. Thus the lad who precariously scaled the floodlight pylon could almost be forgiven, with all those dubious looking policemen (including a Keystone Cop!) egging him on, and with a Superman and a male nurse - albeit in a female's uniform - ready to rescue or save him in the event of a mishap. And until you've seen a (not too seriously hurt) reindeer stretchered off a football pitch while a



group of male nuns run about you can't call yourself a football fan.

Afterwards, a few of us went on to a party where fans of clubs from around the country drank and sang together in friendship to mark the final Saturday of another League season. So many good things came out of May 13th 1989, so many great memories, but they were overshadowed by the fighting and lost in they hysteria. Despite home gates of under 5,000 around 4,500 Blues fans travelled to Selhurst Park determined to show the good side of football supporting and eager to make something of a fixture which would otherwise have been a depressing and forgetable finale to the club's 113 years in the top two divisions. And Blues fans did this in typical style: full of humour, passion and united in the strength of their support come what may. If outsiders had seen further than the sensationalist punch thirsty media reports they'd have found a lot of hope for the future.

Jim Bryant

PALACE MALICE

There was always the possibility there'd be trouble at Crystal Palace. Regrettably, when Blues play a big match trouble tends to go hand in hand. As is often the case, the disturbances looked far worse than they actually were and the presence of TV cameras led to the incidents gaining a nationwide prominence far in excess of that which they merited. But we can't turn a blind eye to what happened or simply breathe a sigh of relief at the FA's decision not to impose an away fan ban. If we want to rid the game of violence, if we want supporters to take part in the game's decision making process, then we have to accept the responsibility that it involves. If peer group pressure can drag those on the fringes of aggro into the thick of it, then pressure from fellow supporters can also deter such fans from violence, racism or using threatening behaviour.

It's unreasonable to expect supporters to actually separate the warring factions because, if nothing else, the police might misinterpret it, and arrest us too. But we can try dissuading fellow fans from joining an incident, aggresively chanting or bragging about great knocks of our time. And if someone around you chants racist or aggressive songs, then drown them out by singing for the team. Small steps maybe, but if we do nothing then there are plenty of people whose answer is ID cards, away fan bans and removal of our liberties.

Clearly not everyone will succumb to such pressure, and with Blues the biggest name in Division Three and the events of Selhurst so widely publicised, the club is going to be under close scrutiny - as the exaggeration of events at Nuneaton has shown.

If there's further aggro the FA might not feel so disposed to absolve Blues of blame as they did over Palace. And however unfair, it's likely that the club would be heavily fined and fans banned from away games. This would be a gift to supporters of ID cards at possibly the moment MPs are voting on them.

Blues have an on-going problem and solving it isn't going to be achieved by simply arresting, fining and banning. The routes of football-related hooliganism go deep and the game can't be expected to solve it in isolation from the rest of society. But there is plenty of evidence at clubs such as Preston, Watford, Crystal Palace and particularly Millwall, that involving the club with its fans and local community leads to a decrease in spectator violence. Blues record on these fronts is woeful. Currently the club has a very negative image, one of a place that takes your money every two weeks and leaves it at that. There has been no attempt to create a feeling of it being a club and youngsters getting into football in the area know that if they want a scrap, they're most likely to get it following Blues. The kids on the pitch at Palace and those egging them on off it were, for the most part, not involved in the Leeds riot - but they have been allowed to acquire the mentality that finds football-related violence acceptable. Blues should organise a junior section, that runs coaches to away games, integrates with opposition supporters and plays football against them. Members should be taught a pride in Birmingham City and understand that they are its guardians.

And those involved in aggro mustn't just be swept under the carpet. They should be invited to the club so Blues could discover why they caused trouble. Blues should also investigate Preston North End's scheme where convicted fans are given stewarding jobs at Deepdale. We'd also like to see courts issue football offenders with community service orders to be served helping the club whose name they have discredited.

Until Blues start examining and tackling hooliganism among their followers they can't really tell the FA and the people of Birmingham that they're doing all they can to solve the problem.

True, these ideas may not get through to the hardcore troublemakers, but they might prevent other fans from endorsing their behaviour and following in their footsteps. If the Board of Directors take action rather than simply mouthing condemnations then it will be a far, far better thing that they do than they have ever done before.

Steve Beauchampé

Singing The Blues

Saturday June 10th and the singing ringing from St Andrews has nothing to do with football as Birmingham City host the summer's first major outdoor concert. The penalty area in front of the Railway End has been transformed into a mighty stage; a sundrenched scene set to thrill one of the biggest crowds to visit the ground for years.

Mid-afternoon on Coventry Road and the pubs are throbbing, the grass is swathed in sunbathers and that big match feeling is in the air. The touts are out in force but trade appears sluggish. I've been queuing in The Watering Hole but if I'd known drink was on sale inside the ground I'd have gone straight in. A shame that, because it means that I've missed the Bhangra boys Alaap and ex-Beat vocalist Ranking Roger with three former Specials . When I do go in, I learn that The Godfathers have pulled out because one of them has chicken pox.

For once you can walk from the clock end of the Kop right round to the visitor's terrace, while both tiers of the main stand are also open, giving access to almost the whole ground. Lack of outlets means long queues for refreshments, but apart from this, the event seems really well organised.

Then, around half five, Robert Palmer, Brian Ferry's only serious challenger for the title 'pop's greatest poseur' slinks on. I'm not a big Palmer fan but the masses seem content as he runs through a string of his ubiquitous non-classic hits. Enough said.

Next up are The Pogues. Their combination of Irish reels and punk ideals has never really grabbed me but although I've come with an open mind their performance is a shambles. Vocalist Shane Macgowan has downed enough to sink a dartboard and not surprisingly appears somewhat 'unco-ordinated'. Frankly, I can't understand a word he's slurring.

In truth, the rest of the band are fairly tight and they aren't helped by either a minor crowd crush at the front which causes a slight delay or Macgowan's brief unscheduled disappearance from the stage mid-song. (Getting another round in perhaps?) Still, things perk up in the last twenty minutes, with 'Thousands Are Sailing' and 'Streets of Sorrow' (neither of which Macgowan sings) though 'The Birmingham Six' - which protests the innocence of those convicted of the pub bombings - offends as many as it pleases. At least two of the band are wearing 'Fans Say No to ID Cards' badges.

But most people are here to see UB40, in the final concert of their 260 date world tour. And at around nine o'clock the band come on. They treat us to a string of their hits, from 'King', 'Red, Red Wine' and 'I Got You Babe' (shame Chrisie Hynde was unavailable) through to new material such as 'Come Out to Play' and "Cos it isn't True'. Their one hour-forty minute set, featuring a duet with poseur Palmer, thrills the 20,000+ crowd who seem determined to enjoy themselves.

The day was a great success and the promoter had clearly done his job well. For Blues, it meant MONEY, though exactly how much has yet to be publicised. And with a worldwide television audience, including parts of Russia and the Far East, the event was also a publicity coup. With Villa Park seemingly out of contention following residents' complaints, the way is clear for St Andrews to become a major venue for stadium rock. (Even if it rains there's plenty of shelter available.)

The first time you try anything on this scale there are bound to be teething troubles, but in this case the troubles seemed to be trifles. Availability of refreshments could certainly be improved, with more mobile sales points inside the stadium. Those touts could have been defeated by selling tickets on the day (though the crowd was large it didn't appear to be a full house). And it would be nice if people living close to the ground could be offered either free tickets or the equivalent in cash as thanks for putting up with the extra noise and inconvenience.

The concert was a boon for traders in the area and although at £12 a ticket the event was probably priced out of the range of most locals, it can only have impressed the watching Samesh and Ramesh. Hopefully this will be just the start of an increase in use of the club's facilities, and if the plans for a sports or leisure centre adjoining Coventry Road come to fruition, then we'll be able to hold concerts in the winter as well. Move over NEC!

Matt Cole

STORY of the BLUES IIII

BLUES BROTHERS IN BRUMINGHAM BID

"IT'S ONE HUNDRED MILES TO BRUMINGHAM, WE'VE GOT A FULL TANK OF GAS, HALF A PACKET OF CIGARETTES, IT'S DARK AND WE'RE WEARING SUNGLASSES."

"HIT IT!"

BRUMINGHAM ENDED THE LAST SEASON IN THE DOLDRUMS SO MACK McMACK WAS APPOINTED TO "ASSIST" GAZZA HARDNOCK. BUT THE HARDNOSED EX-BLUES STAR WAS HAVING NONE OF IT, AND WENT INTO HIDING.
THIS LEFT MACK TO LEAD THE LADS INTO A NEW AGE IN THE CLUB'S HISTORY.
KEN SCRAPP WAS GIVING UP THE CLUB TO TAKE UP HOLY ORDERS.

"BUT WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO BRING BACK THE GOOD TIMES TO BRUMINGHAM. WHO WANTS TO PLAY FOR A SLEEPING GIANT?"

"YES, BUT WE'RE ON A MISSION FROM GOD!"

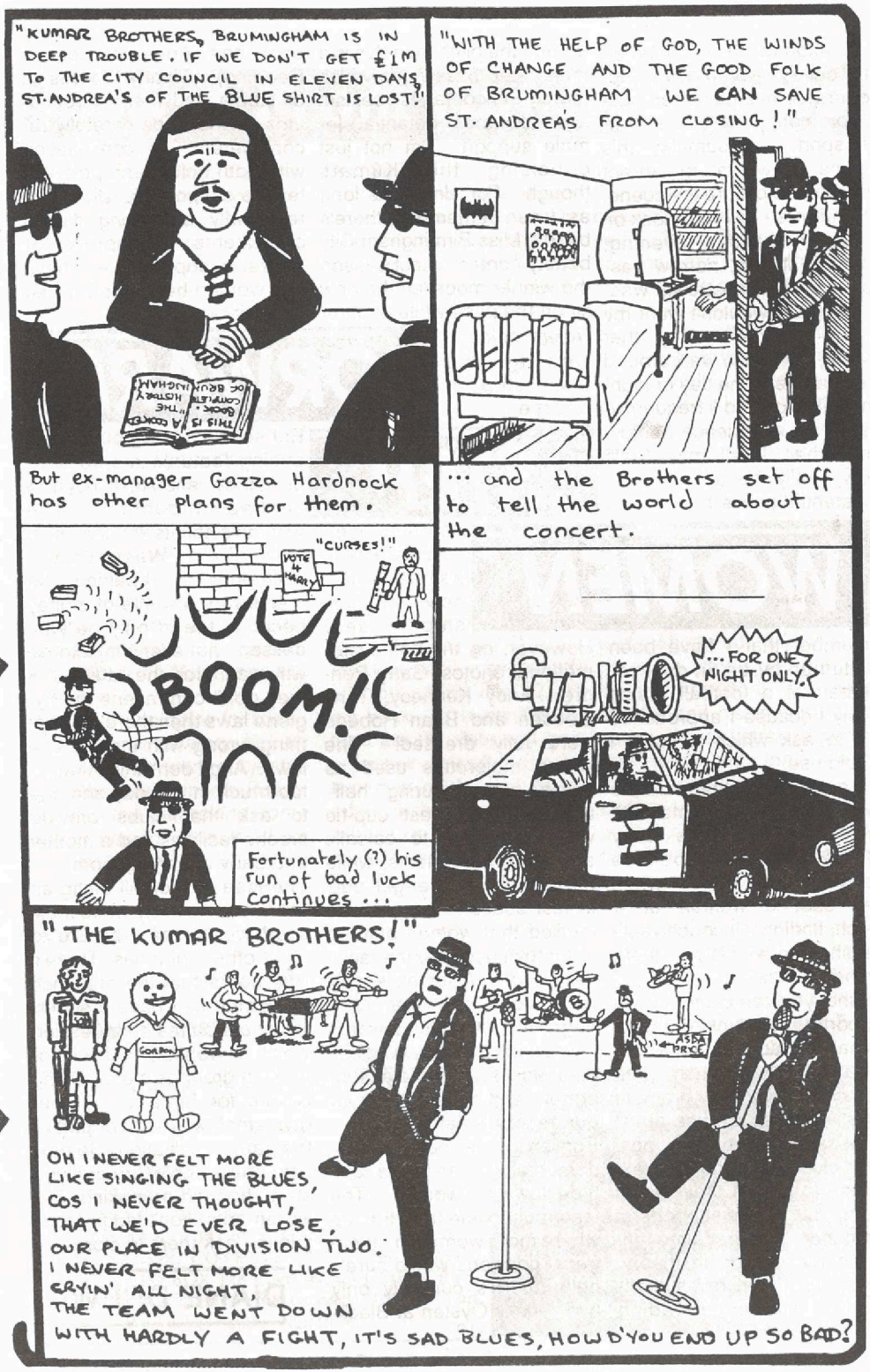
BRUMINGHAM CITY F.C.

"I KNOW WHAT TO DO! A ROCK CONCERT FOR THE FANS, BEFORE THE FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON."

oh oh! it's GAZZA!

Soon the ground was full of cheering, excited BRUMINGHAM fans.

"NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE TO YOU THE EVENING'S STAR ATTRACTION. HERE THEY ARE BACK AFTER THEIR EXCLUSIVE TOUR OF CHINA. WON'T YOU WELCOME..."


"KUMAR BROTHERS, BRUMINGHAM IS IN DEEP TROUBLE. IF WE DON'T GET £1M TO THE CITY COUNCIL IN ELEVEN DAYS, ST. ANDREA'S OF THE BLUE SHIRT IS LOST!"
"WITH THE HELP OF GOD, THE WINDS OF CHANGE AND THE GOOD FOLK OF BRUMINGHAM WE CAN SAVE ST. ANDREA'S FROM CLOSING!"
But ex-manager Gazza Hardnock has other plans for them.
... and the Brothers set off to tell the world about the concert.
"CURSES!"
VOTE 4 HARRY
BOOM!
Fortunately (?) his run of bad luck continues ...
... FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY.
"THE KUMAR BROTHERS!"
GORDON
ASDA PRICE
OH I NEVER FELT MORE LIKE SINGING THE BLUES, COS I NEVER THOUGHT, THAT WE'D EVER LOSE, OUR PLACE IN DIVISION TWO. I NEVER FELT MORE LIKE CRYIN' ALL NIGHT, THE TEAM WENT DOWN WITH HARDLY A FIGHT, IT'S SAD BLUES, HOW D'YOU END UP SO BAD?

FORWARD STEP WOMEN

In an effort to lure a new breed of socially acceptable supporter, football has been busily promoting itself as a 'family' sport. Presumably this means it wants to attract women. So picture the scene: St Andrews - seven o'clock on a dark Tuesday evening, badly lit streets, narrow passageways, litter-strewn wasteground. I wouldn't want my sister, daughter, or for that matter, my son to walk around these areas alone day or night and although I do it frequently, it's not an experience I enjoy. And when I tell myself it's okay really because of the substantial police presence, I remember that I have been chatted up by an on-duty policeman at a football match purely because I approached him to ask which turnstile I should use.

And once inside, there are the swearing slurring idiots with beer breath and the lanky adolescents who believe they've found a 'pull' when they spot a woman at a match, finding it inconceivable that she can possibly be there for the football.

Not that you can blame young supporters for thinking that a woman's place is anywhere but at a football match when the clubs actively promote sexist attitudes. Blues aren't necessarily worse than most other clubs, but I do take exception to one of their recent attempts to entice supporters. Pre-match and half-time entertainment is fine in theory, but when it involves half-dressed women parading around the pitch then this is a major step backwards which merely encourages sexism and alienates potential female support. I'm not just criticising the Kumars though. For almost as long as I can remember, there's been a Miss Birmingham City beauty contest. Last season the winner modelled the new kit on the pitch while another recent holder - wearing the team strip of course - adorned local newspapers advertising a new sponsorship deal. However, on the same promotional photos, Garry Pendrey, Andy Kennedy, Tony Godden and Brian Roberts were fully dressed! The young majorettes used as entertainment during half-time in the Forest cup-tie were subjected to catcalls and obscene remarks, while the pathetic 'soccer girl' quiz in last season's programme implied that women only go to football because the fancy the players. All of this simply re-inforces the generally negative attitudes towards women exhibited by a significant minority of male supporters and does nothing for our general safety.

English football needs to fundamentally change its attitude towards women. The lead must come from the top where more women in managerial positions would surely help (there's currently only two - Vicky Oysten at Blackpool and Anne Bassett at Reading). Clearly the design of stadia and their surroundings needs to be carefully reconsidered - in consultation with both actual and potential female supporters. Blues are reportedly employing design consultants to improve St Andrews appearance - have any women been approached for their opinions?

But some of the ground's off-putting features are so obvious they shouldn't need a second thought. The women's toilets for instance. Now John Westmancoat claimed that repairing the men's was a waste of money because they'd only be vandalised - not even that excuse will wash for the ladies. If they don't contravene the hygiene laws then there's something wrong with the hygiene laws. And I don't think that it's too much in this day and age to ask that clubs provide creche facilities and a mother and baby changing room.

The idea of football being an almost exclusively white male sport would seem absurd to most other countries. There's little doubt that the presence of women can have a sobering effect on male aggression which is reason in itself for making grounds more inviting places for females. In our own small way we are part of the game's salvation. So next time the people around you start chanting or making sexist remarks, don't laugh, don't join in - ask them to stop it.

DIANE DREW

A Wad From Our Sponsors

When Blues visited Sunderland on April 1st the two sides presented a performance appropriate to the date. However Blues fans were bloody amazing! They showed a passion for their club which the press would have us believe could only happen in the North-West or North-East and gave much amusement with their mad antics and ability to make fun of themselves. The support the team received was totally incongruous to their League position. However, all is not lost. From first-hand knowlege, I can say that Division Three is an enjoyable experience and no proper fan should be denied the delights of Wigan's grass slope of Northampton's away pen!

May I also apologise for the ridiculous, intimadatory behaviour which you were subjected to by the Northumbria Police, and also the barracking some of your players received from our racist idiots.

Finally, I saw every Sunderland game last season and you were the best supporters I encountered, so I hope to see you back in Division Two next season.

Stephen Heslop - Tynemouth

Dear Sir/Madam,

Why do Aston Villa always try to upstage us? I thought we'd finally silenced them with our relegation (no more 'You've never been in Division Three' jibes). They win more trophies, draw bigger crowds, make bigger profits. Not content with all this, they're now buying more expensive crocks! I was most impressed with our new management's profligacy in being prepared to risk thirty thousand on Port Vale's Phil Sproson against medical advice. So what do Villa do - dash out and squander £400,000 on Paul 'dodgy knees' McGrath AND highlight their devil-may-care attitude by paying him £2,000 per week. It is my fervent hope that the clubs will rush to arrange a friendly so as the two men might find themselves tussling for a 50/50 ball in the first minute - with inevitable consequences.

Incidentally, I've got a wager with my pals as to who will play least matches this season. Oh well, I suppose we'll just have to get relegated to Division Four - let's see those Villa fans try to beat that!

George Dodbury - Lozells

The article in issue 5 about the Looney in the seats brought to mind another eccentric Blues fan of the same era, namely Peter the Pink Flamingo. He was the Spion Kop regular who used to come to matches with an inflatable pink flamingo rubber ring around his head. In view of the current inflatable craze, the man was, like Martin Peters, ten years ahead of his time.

I never stood next to him at a game, preferring instead to watch from afar. I didn't want my theory that the flamingo was a reference to John Waters' trash epic of the same name shattered. My brother, however, stood by him on several occasions and says that he and his mates had a series of really strange songs that they and they alone sang.

Unfortunately, like the Looney in the seats, Peter and his pink flamingo are nowhere to be seen at St Andrews anymore. I'd lkove to know what happened to the flamingo. I suspect it deflated for good after seeing Keith Bertschin miss one open goal too many.

John O' Sullivan - Erdington

FANZINE ADDRESSES: SWINDON TOWN - Bring The Noise 30p PLUS 22p A4 SAE 10 Devon Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1PQ. **READING** - Taking The Biscuit 75p inc p&p 5 Fetlock Close, Clapham, Bedfordshire, MK41 6BG. **WIMBLEDON** - Yidaho! 5op PLUS 14p A5 SAE 73 Smeaton Rd, Wandsworth, London SW18 5JJ. **PORT VALE** - The Memoirs of Seth Bottomley 25p PLUS 14p A4 SAE PO BOX 418, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 6SB. **COVENTRY CITY** - The Westender 60p inc p&p PO BOX 128 Coventry, CV1 5TQ. **CRYSTAL PALACE** - Eagle Eye 60p inc p&p, 30 Manor Court, York Way, Whetstone, London N20 0DR.

On April 13th my colleague 'phoned John Westmancoat (he got through as well!) about the possible off-loading of an 18-year old Villa apprentice. Westmancoat said that he couldn't understand why Tony Barton wasn't in, but he'd "definitely be in later on".

This would be surprising as Barton had joined Portsmouth over a week earlier.

Malcolm McHenry - Harborne

Hats Off To Larry

The death of Lord (formerly Sir Lawrence) Olivier marks the end of an era for City supporters. Fifty years a St Andrews regular, Larry, as fans affectionately knew him, introduced many legends of stage and screen to the joys of Saturday afternoons down the Blues. His loyalty was boundless - time and again he rejected or skived off major acting roles, feining a 'mystery virus', in order to get to that mid table tussle with Swindon/Norwich/ Southampton. Indeed one wonders just how great an actor he might have become had the lure of giving Stan Lynn or Freddie Pickering an earful not been more attractive than a season at the Old Vic or a lucrative starring role opposite some Hollywood beauty. To see him leading Spion Kop, balancing on the shoulders of Geilgud or Peter O'Toole was an unforgettable sight.

His half-time speeches summarising the play, at their best when he was interpreting an opponent's spectacular dive or bogus offside appeal, could enthrall the crowd, whether performed on the terracing or the grass banking behind. (Where he once amused fans, waiting while a visiting team's half-back enjoyed extensive treatment for a pulled hamstring, by jousting with Errol Flynn in a swashbuckling swordfight.)

And it was at Blues, during a preseason friendly with Glossop, that Olivier first met Vivien Leigh, the great love of his life. Their relationship-tempestuous, stormy and ultimately doomed - was given free reign in the emotional cauldron of Larry's beloved St Andrews. Their petty bickering over team selection could blow up into full scale rows, captivating the crowds. During one particularly animated disagreement at the 1949 derby game, Vivien was arrested, charged with a public order offence and made the subject of a 12 month banning order. Theirs was an affair fired by passion. They made love in the refreshment huts, the Jeff Hall Memorial scoreboard, behing the Kop (in full view of traffic driving up Coventry Road) and, most romantically of all, by flood light (it was Olivier's proud boast that he had scored more times at St Andrews than Joe Bradford). Their break-up in 1961 was acrimonious and melodramatic. Leigh had been flirting in the Paddock with the then young loony in the seats, but eventually, after having more relationships than Clive Allen's had million pound transfer deals, she settled for a man of the cloth. So she was gone, gone with the window cleaner, though Larry always acknowledged what great actresses both Vivien and her son Francis, the Manchester City forward, were.

Like all theatre folk, Olivier was deeply superstitious. He'd never watch a game in the company of children or animals, refused to wear a sweater inside out against Stoke City and never, never said the name Des Bremner - always referring to him instead as 'the Scottish player'. The sale of Trevor Francis in 1979 angered the good Lord. His response was to deliver a withering soliloquy from the sterile section of the Tilton deriding the Coombes dynasty. A little over a year earlier, immediately following the 4-5 home reverse against Chelsea, Olivier and a group of fellow thespians had invaded the pitch and stage an impromptu version of A COMEDY OF ERRORS in the round, to the delight of an appreciative audience.

Hats Off To Larry

In later years ill-health forced him into the sanctuary of the Main Stand. There wrapped in a blanket, he'd share a smuggled-in tot of whiskey with Sir Alec, Dame Flora (the margerine heiress) Chekov's three sisters or whoever else was in town and they'd gossip and anecdote as the Shakespeare flowed like vintage wine. He once improvised a performance of THE MERCHANT on the roof of the executive boxes, with Ken Wheldon cast as Shylock, and many felt that he could have been the answer to the Kumar's pre-match entertainment plans (he certainly would if Vivien had still been around and they'd both been twenty years younger).

Like all great actors, Larry was never truly off the boards. The doyen of St Andrews, he lived every game as he lived every role: dramatising each misplaced pass, clasping his hands to this busom and appealing to the gods in disbelief at a controversial throw-in decision. But through it all he retained a sharp sense of humour; when champions-elect Leeds substituted their blond Welsh midfielder at St Andrews in 1973, Oliver in a brilliant adaptation of the bard, signalled the player's departure: "Alas poor Yorath, I knew him well."

Blues recent demise saddened him, but he remained a regular, silk scarf knotted around his walking stick, a mouthful of expletives always to hand. He continued to travel even when Third Division football had become inevitable. And he bowed out with one final classic moment. Four-nil down at the Palace and 22 points adrift of safety, Larry, in the middle of a packed visitors section and wearing appropriate fancy dress, climbed onto a pantomime horse. With voice quaking and one eye on the forthcoming World Cup qualifier against Poland, he re-inacted perhaps his greatest ever role - Henry V, urging the team to one last effort with the immortal words "Cry God for Harry, (Roberts) England and St Andrews.

SIR RALPH RICHARDSON

MONEY WELL SPENT?

Blues new signings - brilliant or useless? Well we haven't got a clue so we asked the fanzine writers of their clubs to give us their assessments.

Oldbury United

Signed for Oldbury in January 1984 by Dave Robinson. Formerly with Cradley Town. Debut, 7th January at Willenhall Town's Noose Lane ground in a 4-1 defeat. Played in central defence and had a 'goal' disallowed for an unfair challenge on Willenhall's 'keeper.

Spent first few months alternating between attacking and defensive roles. Scored his first goal for Oldbury in a 4-1 victory against Leicester United in Sourthern League Midland game at York Road on 18th February. Attracted the attention of Swindon Town after playing at Forest Green in a Southern League fixture, Bert Head (I think) arranged trials, Gordon was also watched by the then Swindon boss Lou Macari, ironically in another defeat at Willenhall. Played his last match for United in a 4-2 victory over the now defunct Coventry Sporting and signed forms for Swindon after one and half trial games, in October 1984.

Colin Gordon played 32 times for Oldbury, scoring 14 goals.

Swindon

The signing of Colin Gordon for £1,000 in November 1984 was hardly an event to send Swindon fans into ecstatic celebrations, with the club languishing in Division Four, the arrival of an unknown 21-year old from non-League Oldbury didn't make the heart tremble in anticipation.

However, Gordon certainly took to the higher grade, scoring the winner on his debut at Rochdale after coming on

continued over

as substitute. For the rest of the season he was a virtual ever-present top scorer with 17 goals (including a hat-trick at Hereford) and becoming the supporters' Player of the Year. Things were tougher at the start of 1985/86, yet although he didn't find the net until October, Gordon finished the season with 16 goals (including 4 penalties) and made a significant contribution to Swindon's memorable and record-breaking promotion campaign.

I remember Colin Gordon as a big robust centre-forward; powerful in the air and always prepared to let fly with his favoured left foot. (His colleagues dubbed him 'Flash' - probably less a reflection of his personality or habits than of footballers' lack of originality in nicknaming each other). Two memories of Colin stand out. One is a typical Gordon effort in a game against Burnley when, running at full tilt into the penalty area, he launched himself at a cross and rocketed an unstoppable header into the roof of the net. The other is his last full appearance for The Railwaymen at Aldershot in April 1986, Swindon performing like the champions they already were. Gordon was dynamite and two tremendous edge-of-the-area strikes in the first twenty minutes provided the platform for an emphatic victory.

A few weeks later, after scoring 33 goals in 80 appearances, Gordon joined First Division newcomers Wimbledon for £110,000 (bit of a shock that!) Had John Fashanu not been at Plough Lane, who knows what Gordon might have achieved.

Steve Cann

Wimbledon

Colin Gordon eh? Now there's a name to conjure with. Unimaginatively nicknamed 'flash" or "gay", hints of a suppressed playboy image, but unfortunately not much of a speed merchant!!!

Jamie J.

Reading

The current spate of donkey noises aimed at Tony Adams started when, tired of yet another useless Gordon performance, the whole of the Elm Park South Bank started braying spontaneously. We did this again at Chelsea in the Littlewoods Cup, much to the home crowd's amusement.

Colin did get a few goals in his brief spell. A few months after the 'donkey' saga I think he scored 8 in 9 games (Reading's LEADING scorer silences the Elm Park booboys!)

The best memory I have of him was at Wigan last year. I'd just gone for a piss when I heard a large "ooohh" from the Reading contingent. Returning as quickly as I could (and peeing down my trousers in the process) I discovered that Colin had tried to pass to Stuart Beavon and mistakenly hit the bar. Some people still maintain that it was a shot, but most of the crowd refuse to believe it. Such was the man.

Colin Gordon has inspired two songs from Elm Park's diminishing faithful. "Gordon is a moron" and "80,000 down the drain".

He doesn't seem to have made the grade anywhere and I really hope he settles down (but has two bad games against us!) He has the potential but every time he played for Reading he left me feeling frustrated because you knew he was capable of better things.

Tony Ella - Head Honcho - Taking the Biscuit

PHIL SPROSON

Last season, when it became apparent that there was something wrong with 'Spro', Port Vale hurredly shelled out over a quarter of a million on a replacement. A mighty sum, considering our Third Division status at the time and one which gives some indication of his worth. Even the Stoke City fanzine 'The Oatcake' acknowledged our misfortune, printing and article entitled 'Sad Loss', which speaks volumes for how Spro is thought of in the Potteries.

I suppose that casual Vale fans best remember Spro for his six yard blaster that saw Spurs off in the FA Cup two seasons ago. But as the Vale faithful know for a decade he's been totally dependable, hard tackling, and as industrious as any centre half around. His aerial ability will be very important in the Third Diviison, bearing in mind how many kick and rush teams you will come across.

Having spent all of his professional career at Vale Park, it'll be interesting to note how Spro progresses at a new club. Will he have difficulty adapting to his new surroundings? Will he understand the Brummie accent? Will a Blue shirt complement his hair colour? I think Spro will be a useful asset to Blues, seeing as he'll know the opposition

and their style of play and will feel comfortable at a level he's used to. But even if he's not a regualr first teamer, he'll be an excellent navigator on trips to Wigan and Tranmere.
Finally I hope Phil Sproson gives you the same service that made him a Vale Park favourite and is instrumental in getting you back on the road to success

Nick Degg

PAUL SHEPSTONE
COVENTRY CITY

Possibly another one of those red haired midfield dynamos in the making, although without the red hair (in fact without much hair at all as I remember). A stocky, creative midfielder with that low centre of gravity so suited to the darting run into the box. Coventry fans are familiar with this as practiced by Mickey Gynn, and more than a few comparisons have been made. Shepstone scored seven goals for City's youth team last season, although it may not be too wise for him to go straight from the Purity Youth League and occasional reserve team outings, to being hacked about by some of the old pros in third division. All in all, not a bad prospect but then again I maybe thinking of the wrong player.

Ray Pearson

Dennis Bailey
CRYSTAL PALACE

Fast, black, sharp haircut. Played against Sheffield United and skinned them.

Similar style player to Ian Wright and should have been given more chances. Fast. Scored a lot in the reserves and I was sorry to see him go. Bristol Rovers couldn't afford him but you could and you've got a bargain. Born-again Christian. Very fast.

Mark Heath

FAIR SHARES - PART THREE - The Long Hot Summer

The continuing story of one man's fight to widen Birmingham City's share ownership

Since the Kumar takeover, Club Secretary John Westmancoat appears to be in his office more often, as I've had the pleasure (!) of speaking to him on several occasions during the close season. He hasn't processed the share transfer forms though - indeed at no stage has it ever seemed remotely like he was about to. He's been sitting on them now for seven months and his litany of excuses is as tiresome as he is bad at his job. Clearly this situation is intolerable and it's to be expected that the new Chairman will quickly put a stop to this nonsense. However, I believe it to be the case that under company law no share transactions can proceed until the Kumar share offer (50p each) has lapsed, on August 15. Nevertheless I'm not naive enough to think that he won't fudge and fudge again in his apparent goal of preventing the transfer of MY shares to fellow Blues supporters.
This behaviour appears to be typical of the dealings that many other supporters have had with Westmancoat and fellow kingpins of the Wheldon regime. It merely confirms the view that they are scared witless at the idea of fans - whose money makes them their money - having any involvement in the running of the club. They can't face the thought of being made accountable for their (in)actions. They don't want you to know what they're getting up to and they don't trust us - any of us. In their world supporters should know their place - getting soaked in the pouring rain, getting abused by the police, getting crushed to death against a fence.
But in the football world of the late eighties, that attitude just isn't good enough. Everybody who supports Blues should be offered a say in the running of the club - and until such time as Birmingham City allow us the chance to elect some or all of the Board of Directors, then this magazine, and organisations like us, are going to try to ensure that fans get a foot in the door through whatever legal means we may deem necessary. And if the Westmancoats of this world don't like it - tough luck, because like a good Rottweiler, we are NOT letting go.
To buy one share in Blues, send Tired and Weary your FULL NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER. The price is £1.25, which covers the cost of the share, all stockbroking charges and postage.
Finally a reminder of our proxy exchange scheme which allows shareholders who are unable or do not wish to attend the AGM or the forthcoming 'EGM' (the one Wheldon promised last November) to send another supporter along on their behalf. If you would like a fellow fan to attend for you (even though you won't yet have your proxy form) please let us know as soon as you can so that we can sort out the details well in advance.

MATT COLE

David Warren's French Piece

Who are the current French champions? No, not Monaco, they finished third. It's Marseille, who've just paid the entire French gross national product for Chris Waddle. Hot on their tail were Paris St Germain, Auxerre and Sochaux, whose only familiar faces are foreign, effectively keeping them from English TV screens.

Among the best known are the Germans Alloffs and Forster, the Italian Boli and a couple of Yugoslavs, Hadzibegic and Susic. Susic is now a naturalised French citizen, which didn't stop him scoring for the Slavs against France in their recent World Cup qualifier in Belgrade. Alas Alberto Tarantini has now left the murkier reaches of the French Second Division but there are several Britons, Hoddle and Hateley you'll know about, but Simon Stainrod is also reportedly fitting in well at relegated Strasbourg. Meanwhile another ex-Villa man, Didier Six, whiles away his time in the French Division Three Sud with Vallauris (3rd) in front of crowds of under 1,000.

The top French sides are increasingly on a par with Europe's best and Marseille are determined to win the European Cup. Bordeaux narrowly lost 1-0 on aggregate to Napoli in the EUFA Cup while Monaco's breathtaking 6-1 trancing of FC Bruges was

Didier Six

rightly accorded the title of France Football's 'Match of 1988'. (Though their defeat to Galatasory equally qualified as 'Let Down of 1989'.)

At the lower end of the First Division though standards are different. FC Caen (Graham Rix, Brian Stein et al) toured England in February 1988 and were comprehensively stuffed by Luton (4-1) West Brom (2-1) and even Gillingham (3-0). Caen's relegation was a just reward.

The French season runs from July to May, with a one month winter break. Stadia vary greatly; those at St Etienne, Marseille and the Parc des Princes (shared by St Germain and the Racing Club) are particularly well appointed and feature prominently in France's bid to host the 1998 World Cup Finals. Conversely, Sochaux's Bonal Stadium resembles an inferior version of Plough Lane and Caen's 11,000 capacity Veloix Stadium has less chance of staging international football than Moor Green. Admission prices vary according to the quality of the opposition, but you can usually stand behind the goal for 25FF (around £2.50) or less. However this doesn't ensure large attendances. First Division averages range from around 20,000 (Bordeaux, Marseille, St Etienne) to 5,000 or less (Laval, Lille, Monaco, Strasbourg, Toulon); the Parisian clubs sometimes attract 30-40,000 but this figure can include up to 12,000 schoolchildren admitted free.

Two factors probably contribute to these disappointing gates. Firstly, most games are played on Saturday nights and secondly, France has a very open television agreement. All First Division goals are seen on TF1 on Sunday lunchtime and again on A2 that night. Additionally, goals from other European leagues are broadcast and regional news programmes give good accounts of their local Second Division teams. Until recently, live matces were shown on the regional FR3, but not in the area where the match was being played, and this policy worked quite well. Now however, the fourth channel, Canal + (Monaco's shirt sponsors)

Mark Hateley and Glen Hoddle

have entered the fray. To receive their transmissions, you must own a decoder. Those who do are treated to a regular dose of football, not only live from the French League, but also from Spain, Italy and other European countries. So, as in England, footballing interest can be satisfied through TV alone.

Recently one of French soccer's big names, Racing Club 1, has been in great difficulty. Previously Racing Club de Paris, then Matra Racing, the car manufacturers withdrew their sponsorship and the club's future looked bleak. The entire squad was transfer-listed with a slow death seeming imminent until a consortium stepped in and renamed them Racing Club 1. To date though they seem to be doing a thorough asset-strip, offering to sell the complete team with star player Enzo Francescoli set for Marseille. Where the transfer money they receive will go is unclear, for Racing Club 1 may well not start the new season, meaning Strasbourg could yet avoid relegation.

In Division IIa, the financially troubled Abbeville have gone the whole hog and disappeared. Division IVa club Amiens tried to Noades their way up two divisions, but were refused permission to buy Abbeville and instant promotion. Lucky Division IIb club L'AEPB la Roche-sur-Yon (try chanting that at closing time!) have been spared Division Three by dint of their superior playing record among the relegated teams. Rodez too will avoid Division Three

Chris Waddle

if Strasbourg and Racing complete their little pas de deux.

Division Three is a curious beast compared to its English equivalent. France has six regional Third Divisions and few games attract four figure attendances. There are also eight regional Fourth Divisions and most First and Second Division sides run lower division reserve teams. Where fixtures co-incide, the lesser status match is sometimes used as a curtain raiser. Not that this pulls in the crowds - Montpellier's Division Three side recently entertained Nice's in front of fifteen spectators, while on the same day, only six people watched Toulon beat Avignon. And I'm assured that Lyon's Third Division team once played to just ONE spectator in their 54,000 capacity Gerland Stadium.

French clubs are limited to registering two foreigners which recently led to Argentina's Jorge Burruchaga turning out for Nantes' Third Division side. During this time he rubbed noses with such obscure teams as Saint-Lo and Lorient. Other Division Three heroes include a midfield gaggle of des Santoses, Gay of Chaumont, Le Hen of US Montagnarde, Comet of Libourne, Happy of Labege and the delightfully named Fuckala of Charleville. Now if only Blues could sign him....

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

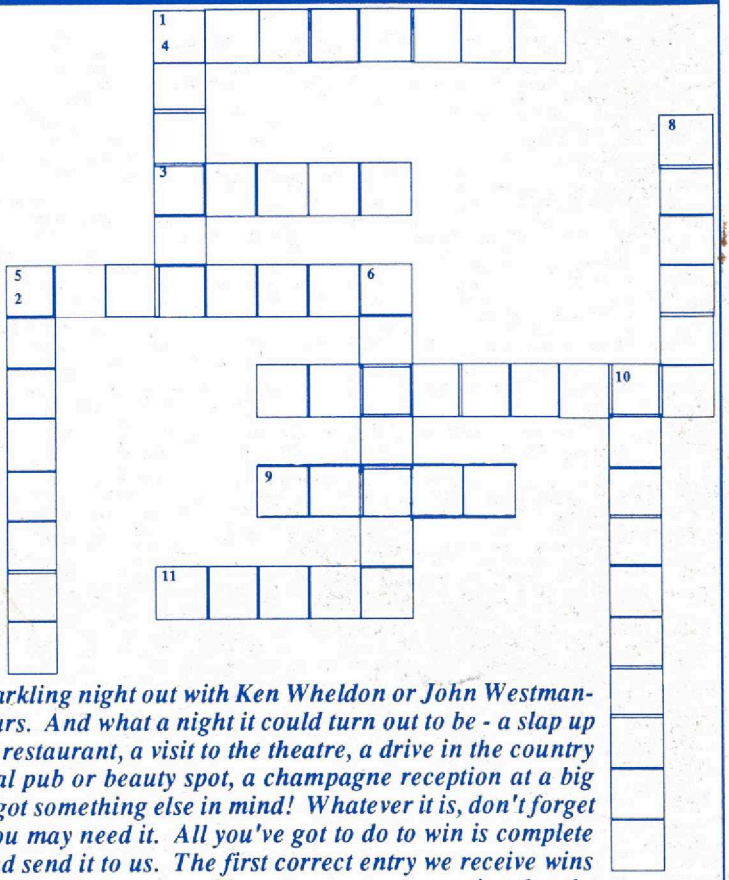
ACROSS

1 Ambition
3 Money
5 Big Names
7 Victories
9 Cheer
11 Goals

DOWN

2 & 4 Business
Acumen
6 Success
8 Crowds
10 Excitement

NEVER A CROSSWORD
WIN A NIGHT OUT WITH KEN OR JOHN
IN OUR SUPER FREE TO ENTER COMPETITION



CLUES

ACROSS

1 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (8)
3 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (5)
5 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (3, 5)
7 Not many of these at St Andrews of late (9)
9 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (5)
11 Not many of these at St Andrews of late (5)

DOWN

2 & 4 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (8,6)
6 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (7)
8 Not many of these at St Andrews of late (6)
10 Not much of this at St Andrews of late (10)

We're giving away a sparkling night out with Ken Wheldon or John Westmancoat* - the choice is yours. And what a night it could turn out to be - a slap up feed at a top city centre restaurant, a visit to the theatre, a drive in the country with a stop-off at a local pub or beauty spot, a champagne reception at a big hotel, or maybe you've got something else in mind! Whatever it is, don't forget to take lots of money you may need it. All you've got to do to win is complete the crossword above and send it to us. The first correct entry we receive wins the prize. And, to help you with the competition, the answers are printed at the bottom of page 19... Best of luck. * Prize subject to availability.

SPONSOR THE BLUES - THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

BOOKINGS

Atkins	**9**	**Ashley**	**1**
Overson	**8**	**Bird**	**1**
Whitton	**5**	**Bremner**	**1**
Langley	**4**	**Childs**	**1**
Roberts	**4**	**Ransom**	**1**
Hopkins	**3**	**Robinson**	**1**
Frain	**2**	**Trewick**	**1**
Wigley	**2**	**Yates**	**1**

Total 45

Sendings off - Overson 1

Our unique sponsorship package closed on a high note with a trio of cautions at Selhurst Park, giving a still disappointing final total of 45 bookings and one sending off. This means that, at 10p a yellow card and 50p per red one, each sponsor has contributed five pounds to the club's coffers. So could all of you who joined our scheme get any outstanding monies to us by no later than first post on 1st October.

Please make your cheques/postal orders payable to Book-OFF and send them to our usual address. We'll arrange for Blues to receive the booty - who knows maybe we'll be presenting leading card men Vince Overson and Ian Atkins with an oversize cheque on the pitch before a home game in the near future.